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A joint publication between the N.C. Division of Emergency Management and N.C. Emergency Management Association

The State Responds to Old Man Winter's Frequent Visits

Old Man Winter showed his fondness for the Tar Heel state by visiting often during the past two months. With each visit, he left cold temperatures, high winds and some combination of freezing rain, ice, sleet and snow for much of the state. The frequent visits prompted state emergency workers to move swiftly to prepare roads and personnel, respond to citizens and tend to transportation routes.

Up to an inch of snow covered much of the Piedmont and Triangle regions of North Carolina on Dec. 16, with other parts of the state experiencing sleet and freezing rain. One weather-related vehicle fatality was reported in Cumberland County.

On Dec. 25, a state of emergency was declared as western part of the state received between three to 15 inches of snow while the central portion got between five and 12 inches. Eastern North Carolina snowfall amounts range from a trace along the coast to as much as 10 inches inland. The N.C. State Highway Patrol responded to more than 2,500 calls across the state for the day and reported four weather-related vehicle fatalities; one each in Mecklenburg, Onslow, Lee and Johnston counties. Additional fatality was reported in Nash County due to a home fire. Wind speeds across the state ranged 20 to 35 miles per hour with gusts as much as 60. At the storm's peak, 32,000 residents were without power.

NC National Guard prepositioned 12 Hummvee teams and armory support teams with six each in the eastern and central branches. One Hummvee team transported a resident dependent on an oxygen machine to a shelter. A total of three shelters were open, but the Nash County resident was the lone occupant.

After recovering from two December visits from Old Man Winter, the state was well prepared to handle another winter storm. The state's third frozen frenzy came Jan. 10 when new snow accumulation of one to 17 inches fell across the state. The snow turned into sleet and freezing rain, causing a wintry, hazardous mess for morning commuters. State Highway Patrol troopers responded to more than 2,500 calls for service that day, many of them wrecks. Many primary and secondary roads across the state were covered with snow and ice.

Gov. Bev Perdue declared another state of emergency. Six N.C. National Guard Hummvees worked alongside other responders in Moore and Anson counties to assist citizens and motorists.

To date, the N.C. Department of Transportation has spent a little over \$26 out of the \$30 million budgeted for this fiscal year for road preparation, snow and ice removal across the state.



Vehicle overturns on Interstate 40 due to slippery conditions caused by snowfall on Dec. 25, 2010 in Buncombe County. Photo courtesy of Margaret Hester with The Asheville Citizen-Times.

Wake County School Shooter Exercise

Wake County emergency response agencies participated in a school shooter exercise Jan. 24 to test their response capabilities to a planned attack at a local school. The full-scale exercise was designed to be a worst-case scenario since the drill was held at a campus that houses both an elementary and middle school. In the scenario, gunmen take control of both buildings.

"We believe that this full-scale exercise is a critical step in our commitment to ensure we are the most prepared to respond to any emergencies that our schools may face," said Randy Dishong, a security investigator for the Wake County Public School System.

In all, nine local and state agencies participated in the exercise. More than 100 volunteers played the roles of students, victims and overly concerned family members to make the drill as realistic as possible. Many law enforcement agencies were not given many details of the exercise to encourage a more realistic response for participating agencies.

Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison said his deputies and the other agencies didn't know what to expect from the drill.

"We want to make sure we're all on one page if something like this would happen. We want to make it as realistic as possible," Harrison said.

Participating agencies included: Cary Emergency Medical Services, Cary Fire Department, Cary Police Department, Raleigh Police Department, Raleigh Fire Department, Raleigh-Wake Emergency Communications, Six Forks Emergency Medical Services, Wake County Emergency Management, Wake County Emergency Medical Services, Wake County Public School System, Wake County Sheriff's Office and state agencies of State Highway Patrol and State Bureau of Investigation.



Law enforcement agents prepare to enter school during Wake County's school shooter drill on Jan. 24. (Bottom) Wake County Sheriff Deputies respond to elements in exercise scenario.



Eastern Branch HURREX 2011 Planning Committee Meet

North Carolina Emergency Management's Eastern Branch Office will hold their monthly 2011 hurricane exercise overview meeting on Feb. 8 in Kinston. An exercise design committee made up of representatives from the Division's Recovery and EBO sections, NC Office of Geospatial and Technology Management as well as representatives from the county will continue the planning process for the branch wide exercise that will take place this spring.

The committee has already decided the exercise scenario will start post landfall of a major hurricane and focus more on the response and recovery phases in disaster response. For more information contact Doug Haas, area four coordinator, at 910-791-5304 or dhaas@ncem.org.

News from NCEM Association's Technology Committee

By Gary Jones, Executive Director, NC Emergency Management Association

Efforts are underway for a complete "make-over" of the North Carolina Emergency Management Association's website. The responsibility for this renovation falls under the Association's Technology Committee, in cooperation with Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI). Jessica Phillips of the Dare County Emergency Management Office is the newly installed chairman of the committee and will be the person leading this improvement effort.

What is envisioned is for the website to become a more interesting, comprehensive, valuable and user friendly site for the Association members and response community within North Carolina, as well as the general public. Along with the ongoing transformation of the website, the technology committee members will begin to take a more day-to-day role in the administration of the website, making this truly a site by and for the Association members.

Last fall, a survey of website users was conducted to better understand how they use the website and how they would like to see the site improved to make it more useful to everyone. Many comments and suggestions were received and physical development of the site has begun. In addition, examples of Emergency Management Associations' websites across the nation were viewed to understand how they were structured and to obtain further ideas for the make-over of our website. However, the progression to modernize the NCEMA website did not proceed past the preliminary planning stage.

With that, the technology committee is now ready to begin again efforts to transform the website. We would like to once again offer the members and potential users an opportunity to provide comments on how they would like to see the website improved!

You can send your ideas, comments and concerns to Jessica Phillips at jessicap@darenc.com. We would like your assistance in the development and eventual improvement of the website to make it both popular and functional for years to come.

Wake County Host BEST Conference

The Wake County Local Emergency Planning Committee will host the 2011 Business Environmental and Safety Training Conference at the NC State University's McKimmon Center on Feb. 9. The seminar runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is FREE for participants.

The BEST conference is designed to give business owners, educators, public safety professionals and many others the opportunity to learn about environmental, safety and emergency response issues that relate to their profession. Seminar topics include: chemical safety and security, hazmat awareness, non-governmental resources, chemical suicide identification, radiation safety, bio-fuel hazards and updates on EPA and OSHA regulations, fire codes and motor vehicle laws.

For more information, visit <http://lnweb02.co.wake.nc.us/EM/BEST11.nsf>

NCHART Respond to Stranded Climbers

By Randy Price, Director, Burke County Office of Emergency Management

On Nov. 24, emergency personnel responded to Table Rock Mountain in the Pisgah National Forest. The response was to aid a climber who was stranded on the rock face and unable to return to his party.

On arrival, the team found the remaining climbers who had been with the missing climber. They confirmed that the climber had failed to respond to signals from the team. The last known point of location was on the cliff face, near the amphitheater section of the mountain.

The first response team was assigned to locate and make contact with the victim. As the first team began operations, additional rescuers assembled to develop a plan to access and remove the climber.

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The operation was complicated by darkness, which arrived about one hour into the event. Furthermore, temperatures were dropping and a rain and cloud front was due to arrive in a few hours. The victim reportedly had only light climbing apparel and we became concerned with the onset of hypothermia.

The first team arrived at the point last seen some two hours later and began trying to locate the climber. With the cold temperatures and exposure to the wind and darkness, we grew very concerned that survival of the victim could be compromised and the safety of the rescue team be impacted.

We requested helicopter assistance from the N.C. Division of Emergency Management. The division approved a mission for a UH-60 Blackhawk, staffed by pilots from the N.C. National Guard. The medical crew was staffed by members of N.C. Helo-Aquatic Rescue Technicians including a Burke County Paramedic and two personnel from Charlotte Fire Department.



(File Photo) Table Rock Mountain in Burke County. Photo courtesy of WSOC-TV.

While the state assets were being assembled, members of the first rescue team had located the victim who was trapped by a wedged rope on the cliff face. They were unable to free him at that point. The aircraft arrived shortly thereafter and began the rescue. The victim was on the cliff face and the pilot was forced to hover in close proximity to the cliffs while the aircrew lowered medical personnel on a cable down to the victim; doing this while in mountain darkness. After more than 20 minutes, the victim was raised and secured in the aircraft. The helicopter also removed four of the rescuers from the scene.

Everyone was airlifted to the care area at the Morganton-Lenoir Airport.

The operation was a textbook illustration of the tremendous skill and training of the NCHART team and the pilots and crew of KD-61. But more so, this operation illustrates the great interoperability and cooperative efforts of all the agencies involved. Numerous agencies came together to provide manpower and equipment and worked diligently to assure the success of the operation.

These agencies that responded were Burke County EMS, NC HART, NC Emergency Management, Station 99 "Burke County Rescue", Station 58 "Jonas Ridge Fire Department", Station 66 "Drexel Fire Department", Station 57 "REACT", McDowell County Rescue Squad, Linville Central Rescue Squad and Bridge Crew/NC Forest Service.

Considering that this operation would have been difficult in daylight, it is a tribute to all involved that it was carried out with such skill and efficiency in the dark!

Spring Conference Update and Training Class Information

By Gary Jones, Executive Director, NC Emergency Management Association

Planning efforts are underway for the upcoming North Carolina Emergency Management Spring 2011 All-Hazards Conference held in Sunset Beach during the week of March 13th.

The draft conference calendar that was developed last month has been published and members of the North Carolina Emergency Management Association's Program Committee have begun contacting potential presenters to obtain their commitment to participate. That process continues with more than half of prospective speakers already confirmed.

While definitive information concerning conference sessions will change from day-to-day as other speakers are confirmed, anyone interested in obtaining the most up-to-date program information should turn to the N.C. Emergency Management Association's website at <https://ncema.renci.org>. On this site, conference specifics are posted and will be updated on a continual basis.

One element of the conference that everyone is excited about is the wide variety of classes and workshops that will be held in conjunction. A total of eight training programs are scheduled with many of them eligible for credit in the North Carolina Emergency Management Certification Program.

Training programs being conducted during conference week include:

- Damage Assessment
- Liability Issues in Emergency Management
- Managing People in Disasters
- Advanced Incident Command System (ICS 400)
- Donations Management
- Training & Exercise Registration Management System (TERMS) Workshop
- WebEOC Workshop
- Earthquake Workshop

Information on the above classes is available through “TERMS” at <http://terms.ncem.org/TRS/>, except for the TERMS, WebEOC and Earthquake workshops. There is no advance registration required for the TERMS or WebEOC workshops, but preregistration is required for the Earthquake workshop planned for Thursday, March 17.

To register for this workshop, contact Joyce Holley at 919-715-8000, ext. 226 or jholley@ncem.org.



4713 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4713

Questions and Comments can be directed to:

Cory Grier, Public Affairs Section
919-733-3824 Email: cgrier@ncem.org

“In the Business of Saving Lives and Protecting Property”

The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management was formed in 1977 to coordinate the preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities of all agencies for emergency management within North Carolina. It performs this mission by planning, organizing, staffing, equipping, training, testing and activating emergency management programs during times of need.